(b) The approximate losses incurred were Rs. 165 crores in 1994-95 and Rs. 166 crores in 1995-96. Figures for 1996-97 are not available.

(c) Despite adoption of various economy measures, the likelihood of these lines becoming viable is remote since the density of traffic on these lines is extremely low and their patronisation is poor.

Reducing of Wagon Load Traffic

1104. SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry has taken a policy decision to reducing 'Wagon Load' traffic and has reduced allotment of wagon to small consignors and has been encouraging large consignors and has been encouraging large consignors for full rake loads, i.e., full train loads only;

(b) if so, the alternative arrangement made by the Railways for such wagon load traffic; and

(c) if not, the category of goods traffic in wagon load and its volume in terms of Net Tonne-KM and Net Freight Receipt per year for the last three years and the projected traffic for the next three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (c) As a matter of operational policy, Railways have encouraged movement of full rake loads to improve productivity of scarce rolling stock thereby eliminating detentions to wagons in marshalling yards. 4-wheeler stock is being phased out and replaced by bogie stock which is not amenable to movement in less than train loads. Elimination of piecemeal wagon movement is also necessary because Railways are basically equipped for transporting high volumes of traffic. However, in order to cater to the needs of small rail customers, Railways have set up a Public Sector Undertaking - Container Corporation of India - under the Ministry of Railways, to aggregate less than train load traffic in multi modal containers and move container trains between identified pairs of points.

Overcharged Depreciation

1105. SHRI RAM NAIK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited has overcharged depreciation and shown a sharply reduced profit in its results for 1995-96;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government are aware that the statutory auditors raised objections to this overcharging;

(d) if so, whether the Government are aware that the MTNL shares were quoted around Rs. 210-215 (during first week of October, which could fetch around Rs. 300/- per share of the face value of Rs. 10 each) and

(e) the action taken/proposed to avoid recurrence of such overcharging in future?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) No, Sir. There is no change in the rates of depreciation since inception of MTNL. The net profit has increased by more than 26% in 1995-96 compared to 1994-95.

(b) Question does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Yes Sir. There has been qualification by Statutory Auditors since 1993-94. The Company has already explained in the Annual Reports that in view of the short span of life of the electronic exchanges which is based on computer system, the revised rate of depreciation on apparatus plant, cables and lines and wire in the Schedule XIV of Companies Act i.e. 5.28% is not considered adequate. Thus the prevailing rate of 11.31% is being charged by the Company by exercising its right to charge a suitable rate of depreciation while making disclosure in its accounts.

(d) Price of shares of any listed company like MTNL is driven by the stock market forces.

(e) Question does not arise in view of what has been stated in (a) and (c) above.

Royalty Revised on Minerals

1106. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the royalty on minerals is being revised once in three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the minerals on which the royalty has been revised in Madhya Pradesh during each of the last three years, and

(d) the minerals on which royalty is proposed to be revised during the current year?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) and (b). As per provisions of Section 9 of Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957 royalty on mineral cannot be enhanced more than once during any period of three years.

(c) and (d). Revision of royalty rates on major minerals other than Coal, Lignite and Sand for Stowing was last made in 1992 which was applicable to Madhya Pradesh also. The Study Group for the next revision of royalty rates on major minerals (other than Coal, lignite and sand for stowing) was constituted on 30.1.95 and the revision of the royalty rates in under consideration of the Government.